Chapter 3

GENERAL INFORMATION ON ISLAM

What Is Islam?

The religion of Islam is the acceptance of and obedience to the teachings of God which He revealed to His last prophet, Muhammad ﷺ.

Some Basic Islamic Beliefs

1) Belief in God:

Muslims believe in one, unique, incomparable God, Who has no son nor partner, and that none has the right to be worshipped but Him alone. He is the true God, and every other deity is false. He has the most magnificent names and sublime perfect attributes. No one shares His divinity, nor His attributes. In the Qur'an, God describes Himself:

> **﴿ Say: "He is God, the One. God, to Whom the creatures turn for their needs. He begets not, nor was He begotten, and there is none like Him." ﴾ (Qur'an, 112:1-4)**



Chapter 112 of the Qur'an written in Arabic calligraphy.

No one has the right to be invoked, supplicated, prayed to, or shown any act of worship, but God alone.

God alone is the Almighty, the Creator, the Sovereign, and the Sustainer of everything in the whole universe. He manages all affairs. He stands in need of none of His creatures, and all His creatures depend on Him for all that they need. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, and the All-Knowing. In a perfect manner, His knowledge encompasses all things, the open and the secret, and the public and the private. He knows what has happened, what will happen, and how it will happen. No affair occurs in the whole world except by His will. Whatever He wills is, and whatever He does not will is not and will never be. His will is above the will of all the creatures. He has power over all things, and He is able to do everything. He is the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, and the Most Beneficent. In one of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, we are told that God is more merciful to His creatures than a mother to her child.[1] God is far removed from injustice and tyranny. He is All-Wise in all of His actions and decrees. If someone wants something from God, he or she can ask God directly without asking anyone else to intercede with God for him or her.

God is not Jesus, and Jesus is not God.[2] Even Jesus himself rejected this. God has said in the Qur'an:

> ﴾ **Indeed, they have disbelieved who have said: "God is the Messiah (Jesus), son of Mary." The Messiah said: "Children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord. Whoever associates partners in worship with God, then God has forbidden Paradise for him, and his home is the Fire (Hell). For the**

(1) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #2754, and *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #5999.
(2) It was reported by the Associated Press, London, on June 25, 1984, that a majority of the Anglican bishops surveyed by a television program said: "Christians are not obliged to believe that Jesus Christ was God." The poll was of 31 of England's 39 bishops. The report further stated that 19 of the 31 bishops said it was sufficient to regard Jesus as "God's supreme agent." The poll was conducted by London Weekend Television's weekly religious program, "Credo."

wrongdoers,[1] there will be no helpers." ﴾ **(Qur'an, 5:72)**

God is not a trinity. God has said in the Qur'an:

﴿ **Indeed, they disbelieve who say: "God is the third of three (in a trinity)," when there is no god but one God. If they desist not from what they say, truly, a painful punishment will befall the disbelievers among them. Would they not rather repent to God and ask His forgiveness? For God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. The Messiah (Jesus), son of Mary, was no more than a messenger...** ﴾ **(Qur'an, 5:73-75)**

Islam rejects that God rested on the seventh day of the creation, that He wrestled with one of His angels, that He is an envious plotter against mankind, or that He is incarnate in any human being. Islam also rejects the attribution of any human form to God. All of these are considered blasphemous. God is the Exalted. He is far removed from every imperfection. He never becomes weary. He does not become drowsy nor does he sleep.

The Arabic word *Allah* means God (the one and only true God who created the whole universe). This word *Allah* is a name for God, which is used by Arabic speakers, both Arab Muslims and Arab Christians. This word cannot be used to designate anything other than the one true God. The Arabic word *Allah* occurs in the Qur'an more than 2150 times. In Aramaic, a language related closely to Arabic and the language that Jesus habitually spoke,[2] God is also referred to as Allah.

2) Belief in the Angels:

Muslims believe in the existence of the angels and that they are honored creatures. The angels worship God alone, obey Him, and act only by His command. Among the angels is Gabriel, who brought down the Qur'an to Muhammad ﷺ.

(1) The wrongdoers include the polytheists.
(2) *NIV Compact Dictionary of the Bible*, Douglas, p. 42.

3) Belief in God's Revealed Books:

Muslims believe that God revealed books to His messengers as proof for mankind and as guidance for them. Among these books is the Qur'an, which God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. God has guaranteed the Qur'an's protection from any corruption or distortion. God has said:

> ﴿ **Indeed, We have sent down the Qur'an, and surely We will guard it (from corruption).** ﴾ **(Qur'an, 15:9)**

4) Belief in the Prophets and Messengers of God:

Muslims believe in the prophets and messengers of God, starting with Adam, including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Jesus (peace be upon them). But God's final message to man, a reconfirmation of the eternal message, was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Muslims believe that Muhammad ﷺ is the last prophet sent by God, as God has said:

> ﴿ **Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but he is the Messenger of God and the last of the prophets...** ﴾ **(Qur'an, 33:40)**

Muslims believe that all the prophets and messengers were created human beings who had none of the divine qualities of God.

5) Belief in the Day of Judgment:

Muslims believe in the Day of Judgment (the Day of Resurrection) when all people will be resurrected for God's judgment according to their beliefs and deeds.

6) Belief in *Al-Qadar*:

Muslims believe in *Al-Qadar*, which is Divine Predestination, but this belief in Divine Predestination does not mean that human beings do not have freewill. Rather, Muslims believe that God has given human beings freewill. This means that they can choose right or wrong and that they are responsible for their choices.

The belief in Divine Predestination includes belief in four things: 1) God knows everything. He knows what has happened

and what will happen. 2) God has recorded all that has happened and all that will happen. 3) Whatever God wills to happen happens, and whatever He wills not to happen does not happen. 4) God is the Creator of everything.

(Please visit **www.islam-guide.com/beliefs** for more information on basic Islamic beliefs.)

Is There Any Sacred Source Other than the Qur'an?

Yes. The *sunnah* (what the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, did, or approved of) is the second source in Islam. The *sunnah* is comprised of *hadeeths,* which are reliably transmitted reports by the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ companions of what he said, did, or approved of. Belief in the *sunnah* is a basic Islamic belief.

Examples of the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ Sayings

- **{ The believers, in their love, mercy, and kindness to one another are like a body: if any part of it is ill, the whole body shares its sleeplessness and fever. }**[1]
- **{ The most perfect of the believers in faith are the best of them in morals. And the best among them are those who are best to their wives. }**[2]
- **{ None of you believes (completely) until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself. }**[3]
- **{ The merciful are shown mercy by the All-Merciful. Show mercy to those on earth, and God will show mercy to you. }**[4]
- **{ Smiling at your brother is charity... }**[5]
- **{ A good word is charity. }**[6]

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(1) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #2586, and *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #6011.
(2) Narrated in *Mosnad Ahmad*, #7354, and *Al-Tirmizi*, #1162.
(3) Narrated in *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #13, and *Saheeh Muslim*, #45.
(4) Narrated in *Al-Tirmizi*, #1924, and *Abu-Dawood*, #4941.
(5) Narrated in *Al-Tirmizi*, #1956.
(6) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #1009, and *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #2989.

- **{ Whoever believes in God and the Last Day (the Day of Judgment) should do good to his neighbor. }**[1]
- **{ God does not judge you according to your appearance and your wealth, but He looks at your hearts and looks into your deeds. }**[2]
- **{ Pay the worker his wage before his sweat dries. }**[3]
- **{ A man walking along a path felt very thirsty. Reaching a well, he descended into it, drank his fill, and came up. Then he saw a dog with its tongue hanging out, trying to lick up mud to quench its thirst. The man said: "This dog is feeling the same thirst that I felt." So he went down into the well again, filled his shoe with water, and gave the dog a drink. So, God thanked him and forgave his sins. } The Prophet ﷺ was asked: "Messenger of God, are we rewarded for kindness towards animals?" He said: { There is a reward for kindness to every living animal or human. }**[4]

What Does Islam Say about the Day of Judgment?

Like Christians, Muslims believe that the present life is only a trial preparation for the next realm of existence. This life is a test for each individual for the life after death. A day will come when the whole universe will be destroyed and the dead will be resurrected for judgment by God. This day will be the beginning of a life that will never end. This day is the Day of Judgment. On that day, all people will be rewarded by God according to their beliefs and deeds. Those who die while believing that **"There is no true god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger (Prophet) of God"** and are Muslim will be rewarded on that day and will be admitted to Paradise forever, as God has said:

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(1) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #48, and *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #6019.
(2) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #2564.
(3) Narrated in *Ibn Majah*, #2443.
(4) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #2244, and *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #2466.

﴾ And those who believe and do good deeds, they are dwellers of Paradise, they dwell therein forever. ﴿ (Qur'an, 2:82)

But those who die while not believing that **"There is no true god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger (Prophet) of God"** or are not Muslim will lose Paradise forever and will be sent to Hellfire, as God has said:

﴾ And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him and he will be one of the losers in the Hereafter. ﴿ (Qur'an, 3:85)

And as He has said:

﴾ Those who have disbelieved and died in disbelief, the earth full of gold would not be accepted from any of them if it were offered as a ransom. They will have a painful punishment, and they will have no helpers. ﴿ (Qur'an, 3:91)

One may ask, 'I think Islam is a good religion, but if I were to convert to Islam, my family, friends, and other people would persecute me and make fun of me. So if I don't convert to Islam, will I enter Paradise and be saved from Hellfire?'

The answer is what God has said in the preceding verse: **"And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him and he will be one of the losers in the Hereafter."**

After having sent the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to call people to Islam, God does not accept adherence to any religion other than Islam. God is our Creator and Sustainer. He created for us whatever is in the earth. All the blessings and good things we have are from Him. So after all this, when someone rejects belief in God, His Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, or His religion of Islam, it is just that he or she be punished in the Hereafter. Actually, the main

purpose of our creation is to worship God alone and to obey Him, as God has said in the Holy Qur'an **(51:56)**.

This life we live today is a very short life. The unbelievers on the Day of Judgment will think that the life they lived on earth was only a day or part of a day, as God has said:

> **﴾ He (God) will say: "How many years did you stay on the earth?" They will say: "We stayed a day or part of a day...." ﴿ (Qur'an, 23:112-113)**

And He has said:

> **﴾ Did you then think that We had created you in jest (without any purpose), and that you would not be returned to Us (in the Hereafter)? So, God is exalted, the True King. None has the right to be worshipped but Him... ﴿ (Qur'an, 23:115-116)**

The life in the Hereafter is a real life. It is not only spiritual, but physical as well. We will live there with our souls and bodies. In comparing this world with the Hereafter, Muhammad ﷺ said: **{ The value of this world compared to that of the Hereafter is like what your finger brings from the sea when you put it in and then take it out. }**[1] That is, the value of this world compared to that of the Hereafter is like a few drops of water compared to the sea.

How Does Someone Become a Muslim?

Simply by saying with conviction, ***"La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadur rasoolu Allah,"*** one converts to Islam and becomes a Muslim. This saying means **"There is no true god but God (Allah),**[2] **and Muhammad is the Messenger (Prophet) of God."**

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(1) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #2858, and *Mosnad Ahmad*, #17560.

(2) As was mentioned on page 47, the Arabic word *Allah* means God (the one and only true God who created the whole universe). This word *Allah* is a name for God, which is used by Arabic speakers, both Arab Muslims and Arab Christians. For more details on the word *Allah*, see the next to last paragraph of page 47.

The first part, "There is no true god but God," means that none has the right to be worshipped but God alone, and that God has neither partner nor son. To be a Muslim, one should also:

- Believe that the Holy Qur'an is the literal word of God, revealed by Him.
- Believe that the Day of Judgment (the Day of Resurrection) is true and will come, as God promised in the Qur'an.
- Accept Islam as his or her religion.
- Not worship anything nor anyone except God.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: **{ God is more joyful at the repentance of someone when he turns to Him in repentance than one of you would be if he were riding his camel in the wilderness, and it runs away from him, carrying his food and drink, so that he loses all hope of getting it back. He comes to a tree and lies down in its shade (awaiting death), for he has lost all hope of finding his camel. Then, while he is in that state (of desperation), suddenly it is there before him! So he seizes its halter and cries out from the depth of his joy: "O God, You are my servant and I am Your Lord!" His mistake comes from the intensity of his joy. }**[1]

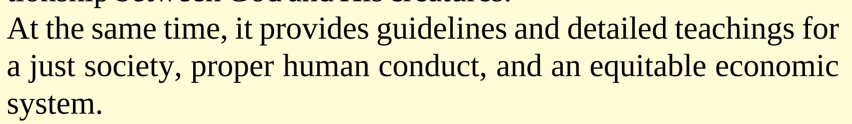


The saying, "There is no true god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger (Prophet) of God," inscribed over an entrance.

(1) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #2747, and *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #6309.

What Is the Qur’an About?

The Qur’an, the last revealed word of God, is the primary source of every Muslim’s faith and practice. It deals with all the subjects which concern human beings: wisdom, doctrine, worship, transactions, law, etc., but its basic theme is the relationship between God and His creatures. At the same time, it provides guidelines and detailed teachings for a just society, proper human conduct, and an equitable economic system.



Note that the Qur’an was revealed to Muhammad ﷺ in Arabic only. So, any Qur’anic translation, either in English or any other language, is neither a Qur’an, nor a version of the Qur’an, but rather it is only a translation of the meaning of the Qur’an. The Qur’an exists only in the Arabic in which it was revealed.

Who Is the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ?

Muhammad ﷺ was born in Makkah in the year 570. Since his father died before his birth and his mother died shortly thereafter, he was raised by his uncle who was from the respected tribe of Quraysh. He was raised illiterate, unable to read or write, and remained so till his death. His people, before his mission as a prophet, were ignorant of science and most of them were illiterate. As he grew up, he became known to be truthful, honest, trustworthy, generous, and sincere. He was so trustworthy that they called him the Trustworthy.[1] Muhammad ﷺ was very religious, and he had long detested the decadence and idolatry of his society.

At the age of forty, Muhammad ﷺ received his first revelation from God through the Angel Gabriel. The revelations continued for twenty-three years, and they are collectively known as the Qur’an.

(1) Narrated in *Mosnad Ahmad*, #15078.



The Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ Mosque in Madinah.

As soon as he began to recite the Qur'an and to preach the truth which God had revealed to him, he and his small group of followers suffered persecution from unbelievers. The persecution grew so fierce that in the year 622 God gave them the command to emigrate. This emigration from Makkah to the city of Madinah, some 260 miles to the north, marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

After several years, Muhammad ﷺ and his followers were able to return to Makkah, where they forgave their enemies. Before Muhammad ﷺ died, at the age of sixty-three, the greater part of the Arabian Peninsula had become Muslim, and within a century of his death, Islam had spread to Spain in the West and as far East as China. Among the reasons for the rapid and peaceful spread of Islam was the truth and clarity of its doctrine. Islam calls for faith in only one God, Who is the only one worthy of worship.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was a perfect example of an honest, just, merciful, compassionate, truthful, and brave human being. Though he was a man, he was far removed from all evil characteristics and strove solely for the sake of God and His reward in the Hereafter. Moreover, in all his actions and dealings, he was ever mindful and fearful of God.

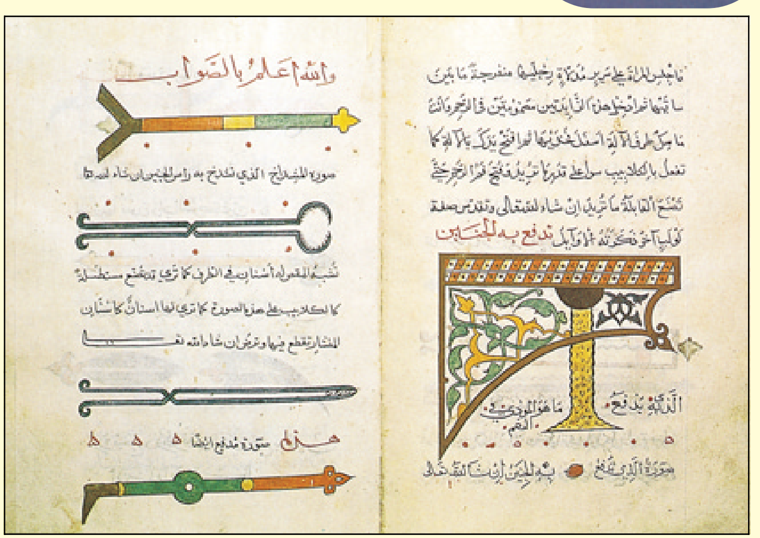
(Please visit **www.islam-guide.com/muhammad** for more information on the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.)

How Did the Spread of Islam Affect the Development of Science?

Islam instructs man to use his powers of intelligence and observation. Within a few years of the spread of Islam, great civilizations and universities were flourishing. The synthesis of Eastern and Western ideas, and of new thought with old, brought about great advances in medicine, mathematics, physics, astronomy, geography, architecture, art, literature, and history. Many crucial systems, such as algebra, the Arabic numerals, and the concept of zero (vital to the advancement of



The astrolabe: One of the most important scientific instruments developed by Muslims which was also used widely in the West until modern times.



Muslim physicians paid much attention to surgery and developed many surgical instruments as seen in this old manuscript.

mathematics), were transmitted to medieval Europe from the Muslim world. Sophisticated instruments which were to make possible the European voyages of discovery, such as the astrolabe, the quadrant, and good navigational maps, were also developed by Muslims.

What Do Muslims Believe about Jesus?

Muslims respect and revere Jesus (peace be upon him). They consider him one of the greatest of God's messengers to mankind. The Qur'an confirms his virgin birth, and a chapter of the Qur'an is entitled '*Maryam*' (Mary). The Qur'an describes the birth of Jesus as follows:

> **﴾ (Remember) when the angels said: "O Mary, God gives you good news of a word from Him (God), whose name is the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, revered in this world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near (to God). He will speak to the people from his cradle and as a man, and he is of the righteous." She said: "My Lord, how can I have a child when no mortal has touched me?" He said: "So (it will be). God creates what He wills. If He decrees a thing, He says to it only, 'Be!' and it is." ﴿ (Qur'an, 3:45-47)**

Jesus was born miraculously by the command of God which had brought Adam into being without a father. God has said:

> **﴾ The case of Jesus with God is like the case of Adam. He created him from dust, and then He said to him, "Be!" and he came into being. ﴿ (Qur'an, 3:59)**

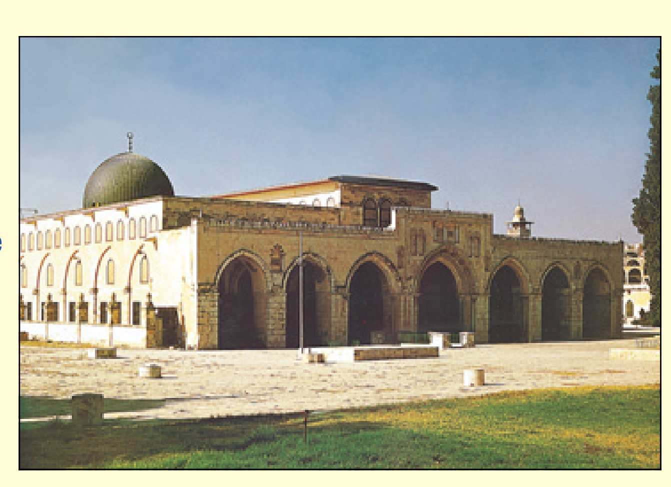
During his prophetic mission, Jesus performed many miracles. God tells us that Jesus said:

﴾ "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. I make for you the shape of a bird out of clay, I breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by God's permission. I heal the blind from birth and the leper. And I bring the dead to life by God's permission. And I tell you what you eat and what you store in your houses...." ﴿ (Qur'an, 3:49)

Muslims believe that Jesus was not crucified. It was the plan of Jesus' enemies to crucify him, but God saved him and raised him up to Him. And the likeness of Jesus was put over another man. Jesus' enemies took this man and crucified him, thinking that he was Jesus. God has said:

﴾ ...They said: "We killed the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of God." They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but the likeness of him was put on another man (and they killed that man)... ﴿ (Qur'an, 4:157)

Neither Muhammad ﷺ nor Jesus came to change the basic doctrine of the belief in one God, brought by earlier prophets, but



The Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

rather to confirm and renew it.[1]

(Please visit **www.islam-guide.com/jesus** for more information on Jesus in Islam.)

What Does Islam Say about Terrorism?

Islam, a religion of mercy, does not permit terrorism. In the Qur'an, God has said:

> ﴾ **God does not forbid you from showing kindness and dealing justly with those who have not fought you about religion and have not driven you out of your homes. God loves just dealers.** ﴿ **(Qur'an, 60:8)**

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used to prohibit soldiers from killing women and children,[2] and he would advise them: **{ ...Do not betray, do not be excessive, do not kill a newborn child. }**[3]

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(1) Muslims also believe that God revealed a holy book to Jesus called the *Injeel*, some parts of which may be still available in the teachings of God to Jesus in the New Testament. But this does not mean that Muslims believe in the Bible we have today because it is not the original scriptures that were revealed by God. They underwent alterations, additions, and omissions. This was also said by the Committee charged with revising *The Holy Bible (Revised Standard Version)*. This Committee consisted of thirty-two scholars who served as members of the Committee. They secured the review and counsel of an Advisory Board of fifty representatives of the co-operating denominations. The Committee said in the Preface to *The Holy Bible (Revised Standard Version)*, p. iv: "Sometimes it is evident that the text has suffered in transmission, but none of the versions provides a satisfactory restoration. Here we can only follow the best judgment of competent scholars as to the most probable reconstruction of the original text." The Committee also said in the Preface, p. vii: "Notes are added which indicate significant variations, additions, or omissions in the ancient authorities (Mt 9.34; Mk 3.16; 7.4; Lk 24.32, 51, etc.)." For more information on the altering of the Bible, please visit **www.islam-guide.com/bible**

(2) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #1744, and *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #3015.

(3) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #1731, and *Al-Tirmizi*, #1408.

And he also said: **{ Whoever has killed a person having a treaty with the Muslims shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise, though its fragrance is found for a span of forty years. }**[1]

Also, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has forbidden punishment with fire.[2]

He once listed murder as the second of the major sins,[3] and he even warned that on the Day of Judgment, **{ The first cases to be adjudicated between people on the Day of Judgment will be those of bloodshed.[4] }**[5]

Muslims are even encouraged to be kind to animals and are forbidden to hurt them. Once the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: **{ A woman was punished because she imprisoned a cat until it died. On account of this, she was doomed to Hell. While she imprisoned it, she did not give the cat food or drink, nor did she free it to eat the insects of the earth. }**[6]

He also said that a man gave a very thirsty dog a drink, so God forgave his sins for this action. The Prophet ﷺ was asked: "Messenger of God, are we rewarded for kindness towards animals?" He said: **{ There is a reward for kindness to every living animal or human. }**[7]

Additionally, while taking the life of an animal for food, Muslims are commanded to do so in a manner that causes the least amount of fright and suffering possible. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: **{ When you slaughter an animal, do so in the best way. One should sharpen his knife to reduce the suffering of the animal. }**[8]

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(1) Narrated in *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #3166, and *Ibn Majah*, #2686.
(2) Narrated in *Abu-Dawood*, #2675.
(3) Narrated in *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #6871, and *Saheeh Muslim*, #88.
(4) This means killing and injuring.
(5) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #1678, and *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #6533.
(6) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #2422, and *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #2365.
(7) This saying of Muhammad ﷺ has been mentioned in more detail on page 50. Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #2244, and *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #2466.
(8) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #1955, and *Al-Tirmizi*, #1409.

In light of these and other Islamic texts, the act of inciting terror in the hearts of defenseless civilians, the wholesale destruction of buildings and properties, the bombing and maiming of innocent men, women, and children are all forbidden and detestable acts according to Islam and the Muslims. Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy, and forgiveness, and the vast majority have nothing to do with the violent events some have associated with Muslims. If an individual Muslim were to commit an act of terrorism, this person would be guilty of violating the laws of Islam.

Human Rights and Justice in Islam

Islam provides many human rights for the individual. The following are some of these human rights that Islam protects.

The life and property of all citizens in an Islamic state are considered sacred, whether a person is Muslim or not. Islam also protects honor. So, in Islam, insulting others or making fun of them is not allowed. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: **{ Truly your blood, your property, and your honor are inviolable. }**[1]

Racism is not allowed in Islam, for the Qur’an speaks of human equality in the following terms:

> **﴿ O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female and have made you into nations and tribes for you to know one another. Truly, the noblest of you with God is the most pious.**[2] **Truly, God is All-Knowing, All-Aware. ﴾ (Qur’an, 49:13)**

Islam rejects certain individuals or nations being favored because of their wealth, power, or race. God created human beings as equals who are to be distinguished from each other only on the basis of their faith and piety. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

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(1) Narrated in *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #1739, and *Mosnad Ahmad*, #2037.
(2) A pious person is a believer who abstains from all kinds of sins, performs all good deeds that God commands us to do, and fears and loves God.

said: **{ O people! Your God is one and your forefather (Adam) is one. An Arab is not better than a non-Arab and a non-Arab is not better than an Arab, and a red (i.e. white tinged with red) person is not better than a black person and a black person is not better than a red person,[1] except in piety. }**[2]

One of the major problems facing mankind today is racism. The developed world can send a man to the moon but cannot stop man from hating and fighting his fellow man. Ever since the days of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Islam has provided a vivid example of how racism can be ended. The annual pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Makkah shows the real Islamic brotherhood of all races and nations, when about two million Muslims from all over the world come to Makkah to perform the pilgrimage.

Islam is a religion of justice. God has said:

> **﴾ Truly God commands you to give back trusts to those to whom they are due, and when you judge between people, to judge with justice.... ﴿ (Qur'an, 4:58)**

And He has said:

> **﴾ ...And act justly. Truly, God loves those who are just. ﴿ (Qur'an, 49:9)**

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(1) The colors mentioned in this Prophetic saying are examples. The meaning is that in Islam no one is better than another because of his color, whether it is white, black, red, or any other color.
(2) Narrated in *Mosnad Ahmad*, #22978.

We should even be just with those who we hate, as God has said:

> ﴾ **...And let not the hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety....** ﴿ **(Qur'an, 5:8)**

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: **{ People, beware of injustice,**[1] **for injustice shall be darkness on the Day of Judgment. }**[2]

And those who have not gotten their rights (i.e. what they have a just claim to) in this life will receive them on the Day of Judgment, as the Prophet ﷺ said: **{ On the Day of Judgment, rights will be given to those to whom they are due (and wrongs will be redressed)... }**[3]

What Is the Status of Women in Islam?

Islam sees a woman, whether single or married, as an individual in her own right, with the right to own and dispose of her property and earnings without any guardianship over her (whether that be her father, husband, or anyone else). She has the right to buy and sell, give gifts and charity, and may spend her money as she pleases. A marriage dowry is given by the groom to the bride for her own personal use, and she keeps her own family name rather than taking her husband's.

Islam encourages the husband to treat his wife well, as the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: **{ The best among you are those who are best to their wives. }**[4]

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(1) i.e. oppressing others, acting unjustly, or doing wrong to others.
(2) Narrated in *Mosnad Ahmad*, #5798, and *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #2447.
(3) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #2582, and *Mosnad Ahmad*, #7163.
(4) Narrated in *Ibn Majah*, #1978, and *Al-Tirmizi*, #3895.

Mothers in Islam are highly honored. Islam recommends treating them in the best way. **A man came to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and said: "O Messenger of God! Who among the people is the most worthy of my good companionship?" The Prophet ﷺ said: { Your mother. } The man said: "Then who?" The Prophet ﷺ said: { Then your mother. } The man further asked: "Then who?" The Prophet ﷺ said: { Then your mother. } The man asked again: "Then who?" The Prophet ﷺ said: { Then your father. }**[1]

(Please visit **www.islam-guide.com/women** for more information on women in Islam.)

The Family in Islam

The family, which is the basic unit of civilization, is now disintegrating. Islam's family system brings the rights of the husband, wife, children, and relatives into a fine equilibrium. It nourishes unselfish behavior, generosity, and love in the framework of a well-organized family system. The peace and security offered by a stable family unit is greatly valued, and it is seen as essential for the spiritual growth of its members. A harmonious social order is created by the existence of extended families and by treasuring children.

How Do Muslims Treat the Elderly?

In the Islamic world, one rarely finds "old people's homes." The strain of caring for one's parents in this most difficult time of their lives is considered an honor and a blessing and an opportunity for great spiritual growth. In Islam, it is not enough that we only pray for our parents, but we should act with limitless compassion, remembering that when we were helpless children, they preferred us to themselves. Mothers are particularly honored. When Muslim parents reach old age, they are treated mercifully, with kindness and selflessness.

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(1) Narrated in *Saheeh Muslim*, #2548, and *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, #5971.

In Islam, serving one's parents is a duty second to prayer, and it is their right to expect it. It is considered despicable to express any irritation when, through no fault of their own, the old become difficult.

God has said:

> ﴾ **Your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents. If one of them or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them a word of disrespect, or scold them, but say a generous word to them. And act humbly to them in mercy, and say: "My Lord, have mercy on them, since they cared for me when I was small."** ﴿ **(Qur'an, 17:23-24)**

What Are the Five Pillars of Islam?

The Five Pillars of Islam are the framework of a Muslim's life. They are the testimony of faith, prayer, giving *zakat* (support of the needy), fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Makkah once in a lifetime for those who are able.

1) The Testimony of Faith:

The testimony of faith is saying with conviction, ***"La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadur rasoolu Allah."*** This saying means **"There is no true god but God (Allah),[1] and Muhammad is the Messenger (Prophet) of God."** The first part, "There is no true god but God," means that none has the right to be worshipped but God alone, and that God has neither partner nor son. This testimony of faith is called the *Shahada*, a simple formula which should be said with conviction in order to convert to Islam (as explained above on pages 52-53). The testimony of faith is the most important pillar of Islam.

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(1) For more details on the word *Allah*, see the next to last paragraph of page 47.

2) Prayer:

Muslims perform five prayers a day. Each prayer does not take more than a few minutes to perform. Prayer in Islam is a direct link between the worshipper and God. There are no intermediaries between God and the worshipper.

In prayer, a person feels inner happiness, peace, and comfort, and that God is pleased with him or her. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: **{ Bilal, call (the people) to prayer, let us be comforted by it. }**[1] Bilal was one of Muhammad's ﷺ companions who was charged to call the people to prayers.

Prayers are performed at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and night. A Muslim may pray almost anywhere, such as in fields, offices, factories, or universities.

(Please visit **www.islam-guide.com/prayer** for more information on prayer in Islam.)[2]

3) Giving *Zakat* (Support of the Needy):

All things belong to God, and wealth is therefore held by human beings in trust. The original meaning of the word *zakat* is both 'purification' and 'growth.' Giving *zakat* means 'giving a specified percentage on certain properties to certain classes of needy people.' The percentage which is due on gold, silver, and cash funds that have reached the amount of about 85 grams of gold and held in possession for one lunar year is two and a half percent. Our possessions are purified by setting aside a small portion for those in need, and, like the pruning of plants, this cutting back balances and encourages new growth.



A person may also give as much as he or she pleases as voluntary alms or charity.

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(1) Narrated in *Abu-Dawood*, #4985, and *Mosnad Ahmad*, #22578.

(2) Or refer to the book entitled *A Guide to Prayer in Islam* by M. A. K. Saqib. For a copy, please visit the web page mentioned above.

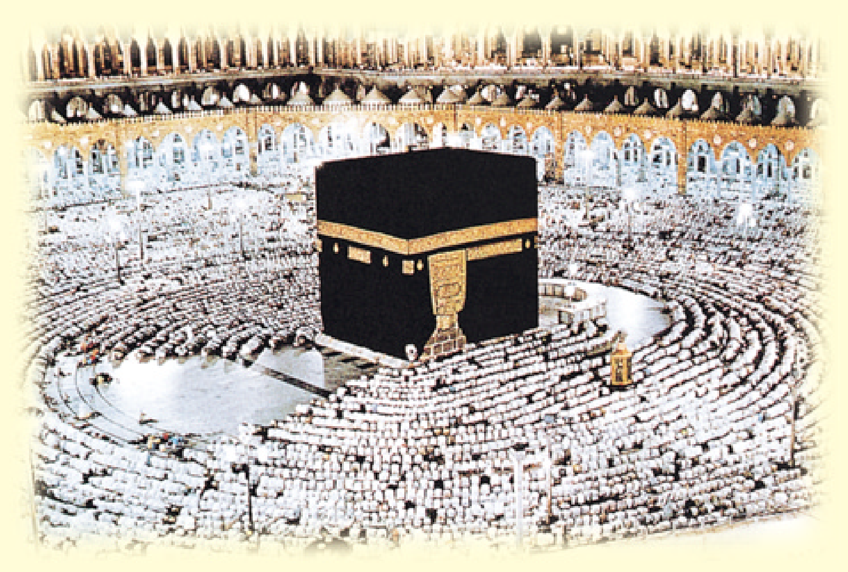
4) Fasting the Month of Ramadan:

Every year in the month of Ramadan,[1] Muslims fast from dawn until sundown, abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations.

Although the fast is beneficial to health, it is regarded principally as a method of spiritual self-purification. By cutting oneself off from worldly comforts, even for a short time, a fasting person gains true sympathy with those who go hungry, as well as growth in his or her spiritual life.

5) The Pilgrimage to Makkah:

The annual pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Makkah is an obligation once in a lifetime for those who are physically and financially able to perform it. About two million people go to Makkah each year from



Pilgrims praying at the *Haram* mosque in Makkah. In this mosque is the Kaaba (the black building in the picture) which Muslims turn toward when praying. The Kaaba is the place of worship which God commanded the Prophets Abraham and his son, Ishmael, to build.

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(1) The month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar (which is lunar, not solar).

every corner of the globe. Although Makkah is always filled with visitors, the annual *Hajj* is performed in the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. Male pilgrims wear special simple clothes which strip away distinctions of class and culture so that all stand equal before God.

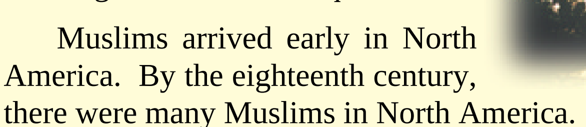
The rites of the *Hajj* include circling the Kaaba seven times and going seven times between the hillocks of Safa and Marwa, as Hagar did during her search for water. Then the pilgrims stand together in Arafa[1] and ask God for what they wish and for His forgiveness, in what is often thought of as a preview of the Day of Judgment.

The end of the *Hajj* is marked by a festival, *Eid Al-Adha*, which is celebrated with prayers. This, and *Eid al-Fitr*, a feast-day commemorating the end of Ramadan, are the two annual festivals of the Muslim calendar.

(Please visit **www.islam-guide.com/pillars** for more information on the Five Pillars of Islam.)

Islam in the United States

It is difficult to generalize about American Muslims. They are converts, immigrants, factory workers, and doctors. This varied community is unified by a common faith, underpinned by a nationwide network of a large number of mosques.



Muslims arrived early in North America. By the eighteenth century, there were many Muslims in North America.

Great numbers of Americans have entered the fold of Islam. They are from different classes: the rich, the poor, the educated, and the illiterate. Today, there are about five and a half million Muslims in the United States.[2]

(1) An area about 15 miles from Makkah.
(2) *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1996*, Famighetti, p. 644.